

Emergency services plan to go to Region tomorrow

By MELANIE HENNESSEY

The Champion

A blueprint for the next decade of emergency medical services (EMS) delivery in Halton will go before regional council tomorrow.

Called the EMS 10-Year Master Plan, the document aims to serve as a strategic planning framework for policy, organizational, capital and operational decisions related to the EMS division.

"The Master Plan is to be a living document that will regularly address service delivery issues in Halton through regular system analysis," the plan reads. "Based on this analysis, options will be developed for station locations, deployment strategies and a 10-year capital facilities plan that will include staffing requirements, operational cost implications and equipment needs."

Halton Director of Land Ambulance Services Jim King provided an overview of the plan at the Region's health and social services meeting last Tuesday.

He said one of the recommendations in the plan is to introduce emergency response units (ERU). He described an ERU as a vehicle that would be smaller than an ambulance and although it wouldn't have the capability of transporting a patient, it would "have the equipment to go and stabilize a patient."

He said an ERU would be staffed by one

paramedic, whereas ambulances have two, resulting in a cost savings for the Region as well. "We believe ERUs is a viable option."

The plan contains 16 recommendations, including that:

- an additional 37 to 54 paramedic full-time staff equivalents be considered within the next 10 years.
- the current paramedic-to-operations supervisor ratio of 20:1 be maintained.
- a combination of ambulance and ERU vehicles be utilized to address future fleet requirements.
- in-vehicle mapping be identified as a technology services priority for evaluation and implementation in EMS response vehicles.
- staff continue to explore options for co-location with other Regional or local municipal facilities.

Regional and Burlington Councillor Joan Lougheed applauded the plan at the committee meeting, calling it "essential."

"I think that this is a really important report," she said.

Halton Region assumed the responsibility of providing EMS services in August, 2000. Regional council then directed staff to create the master plan in 2002.

The committee supported the plan.

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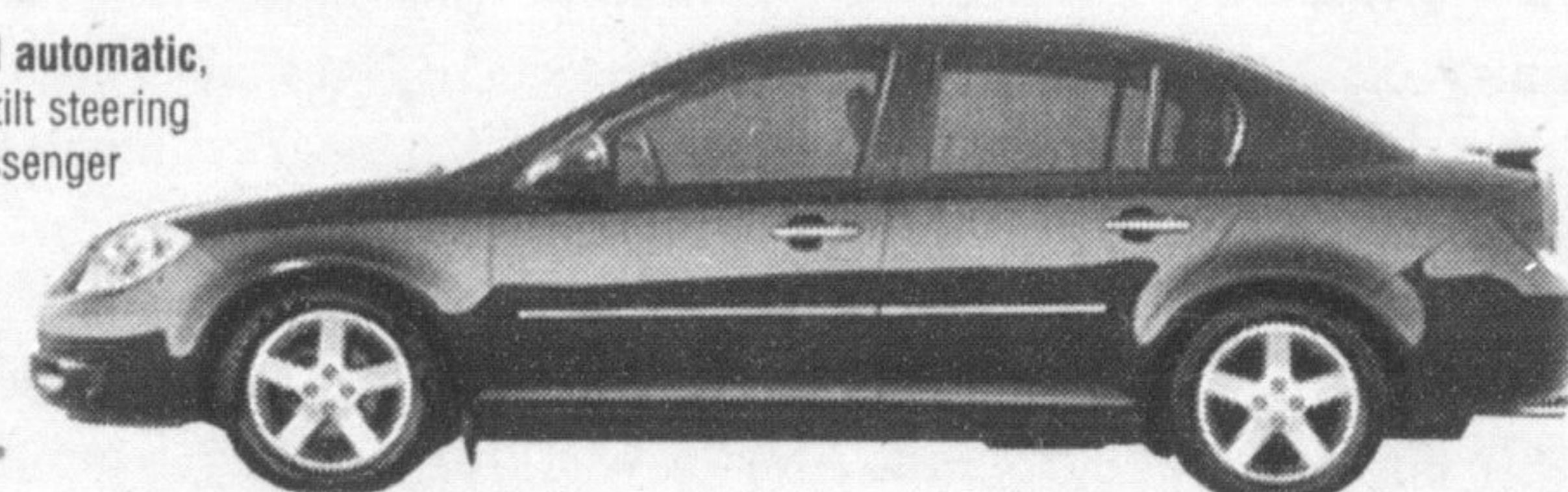
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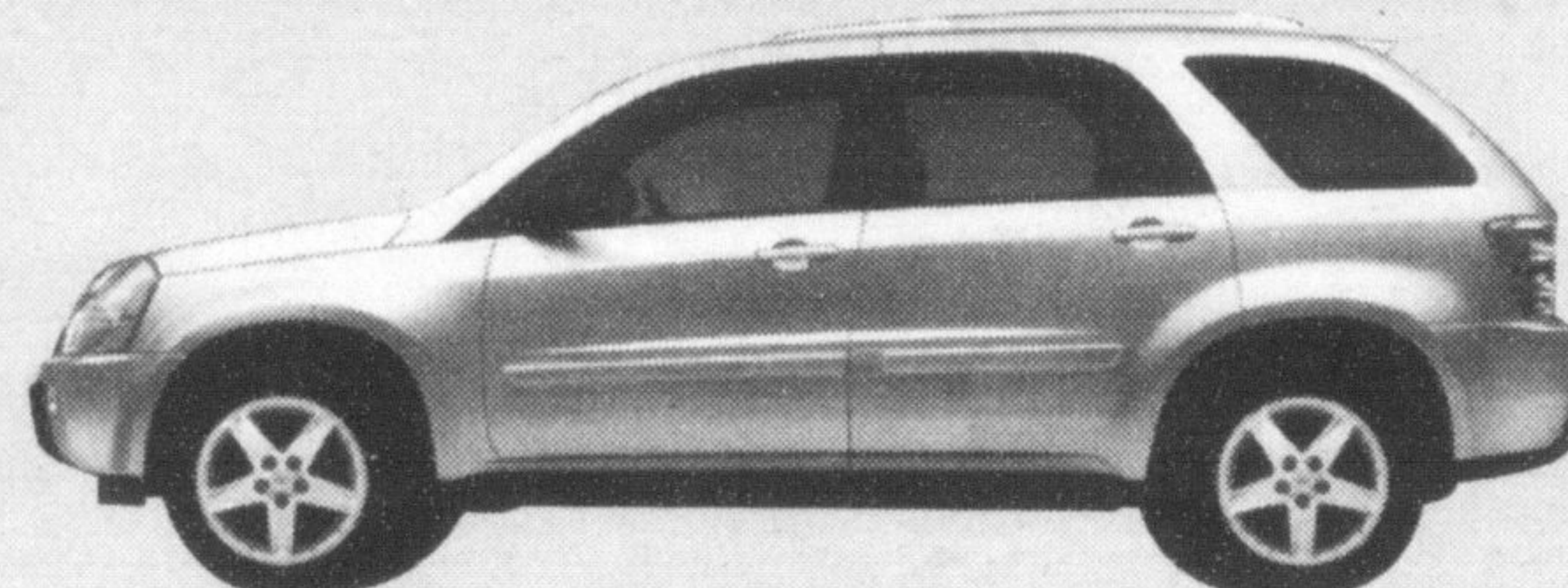
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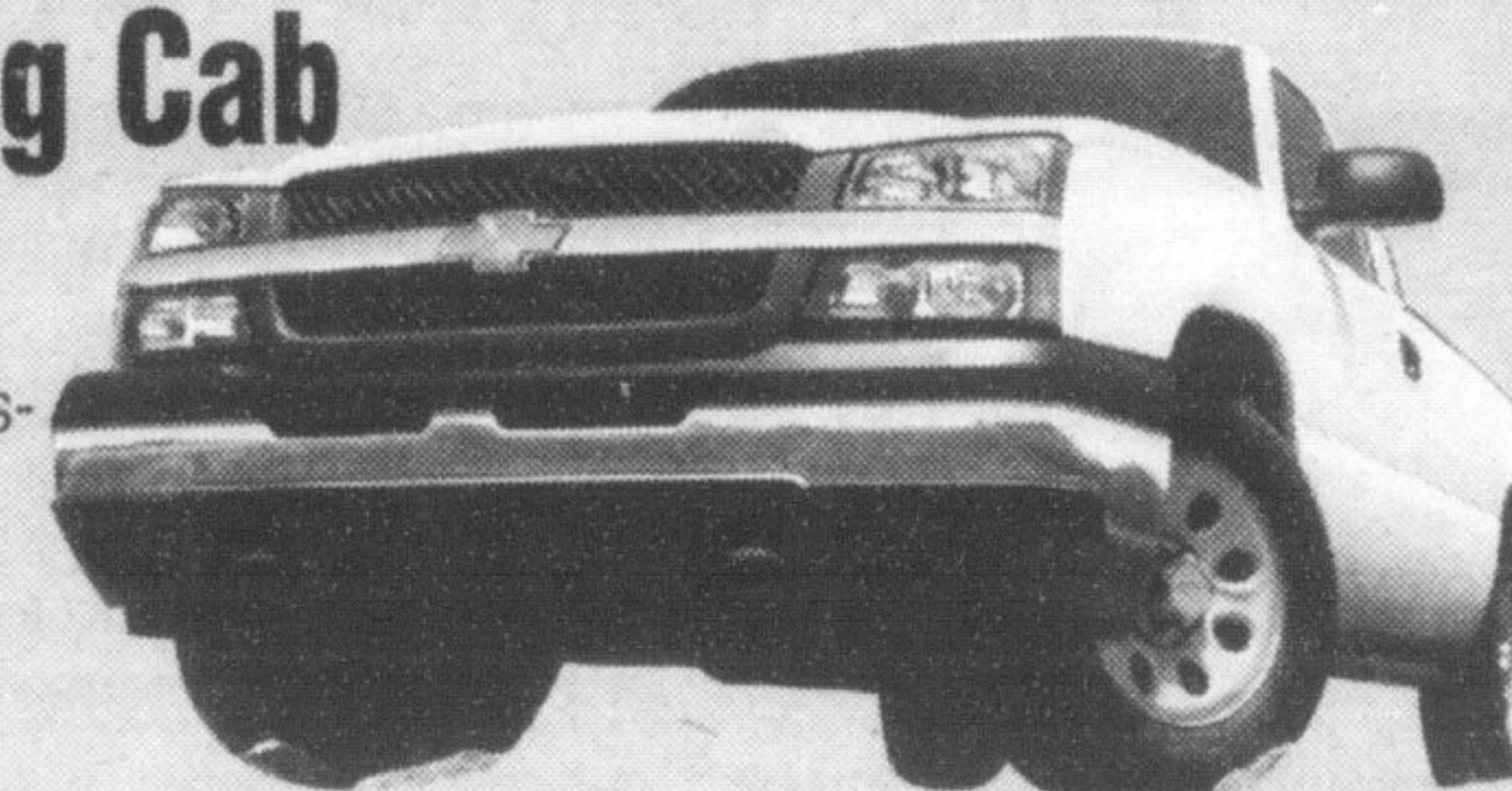
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